



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

January 21, 2005

News Release

ICE SPECIAL AGENTS ARREST 16 ILLEGAL SOUTH KOREANS

Group was New York-bound after crossing U.S.-Canada border

ALBUQUERQUE— U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement special agents arrested 16 illegal aliens from South Korea men who were traveling from Los Angeles to New York on an Amtrak train here Thursday.

The men, whose ages ranged from 23 to 35, were carrying passports issued by the Republic of Korea that were not endorsed properly with U.S. visa or U.S. admission stamps.

ICE special agents determined that a travel agency in Korea facilitated the group's travel to the United States, and that the South Koreans intended to stay and work illegally here.

Along with the passports and train tickets that showed the aliens' destination, ICE special agents also found \$4,000 in cash in the travel bag of 27-year-old Pyung Seop Lee. Lee is charged with transporting, or attempting to transport the aliens within the United States, a violation of Title 8 U.S. Code, Section(s) 1324 (a) (1) (A) (v) II).

"Human smuggling is a despicable criminal activity," said Special Agent-in-Charge Peter J. Smith of ICE's El Paso office. "A priority of ICE is to eliminate the vulnerabilities that criminal enterprises exploit when they bring illegal aliens into the United States."

According to court documents, two of the illegal aliens told ICE special agents they flew from Korea Dec. 21 and arrived that same day in Canada. They spent a week in a Vancouver motel before joining six other Korean nationals to be driven into the United States by car or truck. The group crossed the U.S.-Canada border, and "at one point, the driver announced that they were now in America," and continued to Los Angeles, according to court documents.

The group stayed in a Los Angeles drop house for nearly four weeks before Lee allegedly arrived at the house Wednesday and told them to meet him at the Amtrak train station.

When the individuals arrived at the train station, it is alleged that Lee had already purchased their tickets.

Some of the illegal aliens told ICE special agents it was their understanding they would have to pay Lee money when they arrived in either Chicago or New York.

Lee is being held without bond in the custody of the U.S. Marshal Service.

U.S. Border Patrol officers and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents assisted in locating and identifying the illegal aliens.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.